

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

The principal conclusions of this programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) are:

- (1) Execution of an integrated Chemical and Biological Defense Program (CBDP) designed to protect our soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen from evolving chemical and biological threats they may encounter on the battlefield (the Proposed Action) will not result in significant unmitigable adverse environmental impacts. As the program grows to meet evolving threats, this PEIS will be beneficial for the CBDP as a single reference source for up-to-date National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation, providing information on and analyses of both the biological and the chemical defense programs. It will provide a basis for tiering of future environmental analyses under the CBDP, which will facilitate future government decision making. It will have further benefits for the public, sharing information on features of the CBDP that demonstrate the Department of Defense (DoD) commitment to protect the environment and to ensure public safety during the execution of this operationally mandated program.
- (2) Continuation of current CBDP operations as described in and covered by existing environmental analyses (the No Action Alternative) cannot reasonably be expected to improve the efficiency of analyzing future CBDP activity environmental impacts and would not inform the public about government decision making as well as the Proposed Action.
- (3) Neither the Proposed Action nor the No Action Alternative is likely to cause significant adverse environmental impacts. However, the proposed action is preferred to achieve the benefits cited above for the integrated program, designed to protect against evolving threats.
- (4) The impacts of existing CBDP activities at the example sites on environmental attributes all were found to be negligible to minor, and mitigable. This suggests that the scale of the enumerated activities can be increased without causing significant, unmitigable environmental and health impacts. However, NEPA considerations will continue to be addressed as necessary for site-specific proposed actions, including both construction and operations that are part of the CBDP. Also, future activities not identified in this PEIS may require both site-specific and programmatic NEPA documentation.

Current and proposed CBDP research, development, and acquisition (RDA) activities have been and will likely continue to be performed without significant environmental impacts. The most severe potential effects associated with CBDP RDA activities are predicted to be minor; to date, any observed effects have been insignificant. Potential risks to CBDP laboratory workers, public health, and the environment are and will be mitigated by adherence to the benchmark guidelines and regulations listed in Section 2.3 of this PEIS and by following appropriate state and local regulations and site-specific regulations and standard operating procedures similar to those presented in Section 2.4.